

**CONNECTICUT SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION, INC.**

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February 24, 2011

Dear Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee;

My name is Mallory Buckingham. I am the VP of Government Affairs with the Connecticut Speech Language and Hearing Association (CSHA). I am writing you RE: SB 1038 AN ACT CONCERNING INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

According to the State Department of Education, Speech Language Pathologists are the number one shortage profession, yet we provide more services through the IEP than any other discipline in the state's public schools. We belong to Special Education Related Services, which includes Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Reading specialists and School Psychologists. We applaud the efforts of the IEP taskforce for their efforts to make improvements to the current IEP process and it's documents.

We are concerned specifically about Section 1, 8 G, which narrows the timeline for IEP evaluations. I do not work in the schools but have heard from my colleagues on this subject.

Many feel that they usually meet the proposed evaluation timeline, but were concerned that making it a law could cause an increase in expensive due process cases. Snow days, children absent, PMT testing, illness, all contribute to missed timelines, beyond the control of the evaluators. And related services are stretched thin as it is, yet doing the most evaluation work. We hope you will support related services personnel in the schools by following the lead of the State Department of Education. CSHA supported their effort to adopt IDEA language for their regulations because it applied broader evaluation deadlines, which benefits our members and their students. A speech pathologist who had worked under both narrow and broader evaluation time lines told me that when there are narrow deadlines for testing, poorer quality testing takes place. What else could happen? Natural observation, language analysis, and standardized testing takes time to do well. And when we don't diagnose well, we can't intervene as effectively. It appears that narrow evaluation deadlines do not benefit students or families.

We thank the committee for their work on SB 1038, and support the measures, with the exception of Section 1, G8.

We hope you will follow the IDEA language re: IEP evaluation timelines.

Thank for your attention to our concern.

Sincerely,

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